

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

File No. 9110053

WORLD TRADE CENTER TASK FORCE INTERVIEW

F. F. KEVIN MC GOVERN

Interview Date: October 11, 2002

Transcribed by Maureen McCormick

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

MR. CUNDARI: The date is October 11, 2001. The time is 1030 hours, and this is George Cundari and Murray Murad, Fire Department City of New York. I'm conducting an interview with the following individual.

Q. Please state your name, rank, title and assigned command.

A. My name is Firefighter Kevin McGovern, 1st Grade firefighter.

Q. Assigned to?

A. Engine 53.

Q. At the Fire Department, City of New York. We are at Engine 53, regarding the events of September 11, 2001.

Can you just tell us what happened that day?

A. Basically, we first found out what was going on when we heard a 1060 come over the radio, and someone yelled out that a plane had hit one of the World Trade Center towers, so we put on the TV, and we were kind of watching it, and guys kind of -- I'm not even sure what time that was. I guess it was probably about 8:48 when the 1060 came in.

1

2 Q. 1060 is a what? What is a 1060?

3 A. I mean, it's pretty much catastrophic
4 event that requires an enormous amount of
5 apparatus and personnel, so I was in the --
6 everybody kind of gravitated out to the house
7 watch, and I was watching TV alone in the
8 kitchen, and all of a sudden you see the second
9 tower explode.

10 I couldn't tell at the time it was an
11 airplane. At this time, we didn't know it was a
12 terrorist attack when the first one hit. We just
13 thought maybe it was some airplane that had
14 trouble and hit the tower, but when we saw the
15 second one hit, I didn't realize it was an
16 airplane at first, but then they replayed it
17 slowly, and we realized it was a terrorist
18 attack, and shortly after the second plane hit,
19 within a minute or two after, we got assigned to
20 the box. We were assigned to the south tower,
21 which is Tower 2.

22 Q. That would be the second plane that
23 hit?

24 A. Yeah, that was the second tower hit,
25 and we were assigned to that on the box.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

We made pretty good time going down there. We cut through central park, across 57th Street, shot down the Westside Highway real quick. I remember our chauffeur telling me that he thought we got there in about ten minutes, which is pretty good time.

We parked the rig on Westside Highway between Vesey and Murray. Just a ton of rigs there, and we just found a spot and put it in, and then we walked down to the command post, which was located in front of an underground garage at Two World Financial Center, and we -- we reported in there.

We were kind of standing there, you know, waiting for our assignment to go in. They held us there for a few minutes, so we kind of just sat there watching the bodies coming down, jumpers from the north tower, because we were kind of in front of -- near the north tower where the command center was.

Q. You really couldn't see the south tower from your position?

A. We could see the top of the south tower, but it was kind of right there, so we were

1
2 kind of at the -- opposite the southwest corner
3 of the north tower, so we were kind of standing
4 there, and a lot of bodies coming down, maybe one
5 every twenty seconds or so, and then we got
6 assigned to move some rigs.

7 The way the rigs were parked on West
8 Street, the -- there was a captain, who I assume
9 was ABCing, and I found out his name later, and I
10 think he's since been promoted to chief, but his
11 name is I think, Sedmark, Sedmark or something
12 like that.

13 Q. At the command center?

14 A. At the command center in front of the
15 underground garage at Two World Financial Center,
16 and he asked us to go north and make a lane for
17 ambulances, make sure all the rigs are to the
18 side and that there is a clear lane for
19 ambulances to come down, so we did that.

20 I think we only had to move two rigs.
21 We had two other chauffeurs there. They moved
22 them, and then it -- that probably took ten to
23 fifteen minutes, you know. They just needed to
24 clear, get them a little bit out of the way to
25 make a lane, so we did that, and we headed back,

1
2 and on our way back to the command post, I guess
3 the officer Bob Doherty was in front of me, and
4 he was with the chauffeur, Louis Giacanale, and
5 the senior guy that day, Eddie Catcher, and I was
6 kind of lagging behind, and the two probies were
7 behind me, because I kind of waited. I thought
8 another couple of more rigs might have needed
9 moving, but they decided that they didn't need
10 moving.

11 Q. Do you remember who was in the command
12 post, what chiefs were there?

13 A. No, I don't remember, but I remember
14 Bob Doherty told me that he seen Ganci there. We
15 were kind of like behind the command post, and I
16 really didn't recognize who was there, but Bob
17 Doherty said that Ganci was there, so we were on
18 our way back to the command post, and like I
19 said, I was kind of lagging behind the officer
20 and two senior men, and just as they got to near
21 the garage, near the garage entrance where the
22 command post was, the south tower started
23 collapsing, and like I said, I was lagging behind
24 a little bit, and there was a fence between the
25 winter garden and where the command post was, so

1
2 these guys -- they were close to the garage.
3 Those guys -- three guys ran down into the garage
4 past the command post. I was behind them, and
5 the fence was between us, so I just decided --
6 you know, I seen when the thing started
7 collapsing. It just sounded like a huge
8 thunderous noise, and I looked up and looked like
9 a big, gray concrete wave coming down on me, so
10 rather than running towards it and around the
11 fence, I just turned right and into the rear and
12 ran up -- there was a little plaza in front of
13 the winter garden entrance. I ran up that plaza,
14 and ran into the Winter Garden entrance, and from
15 there, I just had -- I didn't realize it was an
16 atrium, until I got in there, and I looked up and
17 saw it was an atrium, so I kept running to -- you
18 know, through the Winter Garden. Actually, there
19 is a hallway between the Winter Garden and the
20 one World Financial Center.

21 Q. You are inside the building now?

22 A. I'm inside the building, and there is
23 a hallway there, so I just ran down that hallway
24 and made a right.

25 Q. Were there people inside there?

1

2 A. Yeah, everybody -- like I said, when
3 it started collapsing, people were just -- I
4 stopped. I seen all these people running towards
5 me, and I just turned and ran, and ran into the
6 Winter Garden, and ran down the hallway, and then
7 made a right, which would be heading north
8 through the next -- to the Three World Financial
9 Center.

10 There was an exit there, so we came
11 out the north side of that building, you know,
12 through the winter garden, went north, came out
13 the north side, went to Vesey Street.

14 Q. At that time, were the probies with
15 you that were behind you?

16 A. Yeah. I spotted the one probie in the
17 Winter Garden as we were running. He was behind
18 me, so I grabbed him and I made sure we were
19 together. I didn't see the other probie, so we
20 came out onto Vesey Street, and then we were
21 walking west on Vesey towards the water, trying
22 to get away from the cloud on West Street, and
23 the other probie -- we happened to see the other
24 probie in an ambulance on Vesey. He was kind of
25 hyperventilating. He was taking oxygen in an

1
2 ambulance on Vesey, I guess from the, you know,
3 the trauma and the running.

4 Q. That's near North End Street, the
5 ambulance?

6 A. Yeah, the ambulances were near North
7 End Street and Vesey.

8 Q. So you ended up at North End and
9 Vesey?

10 A. Yeah, and there were ambulances lined
11 up there, and like I said, the one probie spotted
12 the other probie in the ambulance, so I kind of
13 waited with him to make sure he was okay, and he
14 got his breathe, and then there was a call they
15 had to move the ambulances off of Vesey, so they
16 moved them up onto North End Street.

17 So we stayed with this guy, and I seen
18 another firefighter come down the street, and he
19 looked like a snowman. He was just covered in
20 gray ash, and he was hacking like he was choking,
21 so I went over to assist him, and I was kind of
22 helping him out, and I was saying, you know, come
23 into the ambulance, get some oxygen, and he was
24 kind of like all wound up. He was, like, I'm
25 okay. He kept yelling, I'm okay. I'm okay.

1

2 Leave me alone. Don't touch me. I'm okay.

3

4 But he was coughing like he had almost
5 something stuck in his throat, so I kind of
6 stayed with him, and he was -- he got down on all
7 fours and was coughing and hacking up stuff, so I
8 kind of stayed with him for awhile, and then we
9 got him to an ambulance to get him some oxygen.

10 We started walking up North End Street
11 because there was a big cloud towards West Street
12 on Vesey, so we figured we'd go up around the
13 block, and I stopped at another ambulance. There
14 was this EMT inside, and she was freaking out,
15 screaming, "Where is my partner? Where is my
16 partner? Where is my partner?"

17 And I'm like trying to calm her down
18 and I said, "Take some oxygen. Take some
19 oxygen." So I stayed with her for a minute, and
20 those jets flying over turned out to be our jets,
21 because you can tell by the sign. I looked up.
22 I seen our Air Force jets. I said, "Those are
23 our jets."

24 She was like freaking out, what's
25 going on, because she heard the sound of the
jets, and she -- kind of got her more excited, so

1

2 I stayed with her about a minute, and I said,

3 "Just take some oxygen. Stay inside. Your

4 partner will come back to you."

5 So we headed north on North End

6 Street, went up to Murray, made a right on Murray

7 back towards West Street, and we kind of

8 regrouped there.

9 The probie that was in the ambulance

10 taking oxygen decided he was okay, so he came

11 with us. So we needed you know, to settle

12 ourselves down a little bit and up north of

13 Murray and West Street, and they were pretty

14 shook up, the two probies, so I said, "All right,

15 why don't you guys wait here? I want to find the

16 lieutenant, let him know I'm okay."

17 So I started heading south on West

18 Street, and I got, you know, maybe halfway down

19 to Vesey, probably halfway between Murray and

20 Vesey when the second tower collapsed, so I just

21 turned and ran north on West Street, back up to

22 Murray.

23 Q. Did you feel the vibration of the

24 tower collapsing or you just saw it?

25 A. Just another thunderous sound, and I

1
2 just looked up and seen it all coming down, you
3 know, antenna on top of it, so I just turned and
4 ran along with everybody else north on West
5 Street. So I got to Murray and kind of stayed up
6 there up near Stuyvesant High School.

7 I ended up actually going over to
8 Stuyvesant and ducking in there when the cloud
9 came by, so I waited there for a second, came
10 outside. I just assumed the probies were okay,
11 because they were up by Stuyvesant. I just
12 assumed they ran into the school.

13 So I let the clouds settle up, and I
14 headed back down West Street after the second
15 collapse. I wanted to find my lieutenant, let
16 him know I was okay, and actually see how he was
17 doing, so I got to Vesey, and I met some members
18 of Ladder 43, and they said that my lieutenant
19 was up near North End and Vesey, so when somebody
20 -- between the first collapse and the second
21 collapse, somebody had moved our rig. I guess
22 somebody on West Street moved our rig over
23 towards the water on Vesey, and a fireboat hooked
24 up to supply water, so like I said, I ran into
25 these guys from 43 truck, and they said my boss

1
2 was up by the water with the rig, so I walked up
3 there and met the boss and let him know I was
4 okay, told him the probies were okay, and I was
5 there.

6 We just kind of like -- we went back
7 up to get the probies. There was a -- they had
8 established a staging area up there at West
9 Street at that time, so we kind of waited there
10 for awhile, and then we headed down West Street
11 and just started to go among the rubble, kind of
12 near where we -- where the command post was just
13 south of Vesey, and just started, you know,
14 searching around in there, but it was difficult
15 to search because of the amount of ash, concrete
16 ash, if you will, so I just kind of searched for
17 awhile, and I don't know how long that was, maybe
18 45 minutes to an hour. And just searched.

19 We didn't find anything, actually. It
20 was just nothing there. Everything was just
21 pulverized basically. You didn't find desks.
22 You didn't find anything. Just -- it was just
23 steel and pulverized concrete.

24 While we were searching, that's when 7
25 World Trade Center was pretty much on fire, so

1
2 after awhile, they -- we left, and they pulled a
3 lot of people out of the rubble, because they
4 were worried about 7 coming down, so we went back
5 up Vesey, sat by the rig, because -- we kind of
6 sat there for a long time, because they had
7 pulled people back, because they were worried
8 about 7 coming down.

9 Q. Did you have radio communications?
10 Were you able to reach your bosses?

11 A. No, like we -- we did try when we were
12 on -- after we found the one probie in the
13 ambulance, we tried communicating a couple of
14 times. I figured it wouldn't work because there
15 was so much going on, and we couldn't get
16 through, so I just --

17 Q. So before 7 came down, they just
18 verbally told to get out, and the radios weren't
19 up then, right?

20 A. Yeah, I think our lieutenant said,
21 "Look, we're going to take a break," and then
22 just as we were leaving, they were moving
23 everybody out anyway.

24 They were just saying, all right, just
25 waving people out by signal, and that's pretty

1
2 much it. We sat up by the rig which was being
3 fed by the marine unit, and there was a line from
4 us stretched to one of the tower ladders on
5 Vesey, which had to also pull back, too, because
6 of 7 coming down, and we just kind of stayed with
7 the rig until 7 came down and kind of awaited
8 orders and really didn't -- you know, really
9 didn't get any assignments.

10 I guess they were worried about the
11 stability of everything. So that was about it.
12 I kind of stayed with the rig the rest of the
13 night, and that's all. I think we left there
14 about nine o'clock at night.

15 Q. Two questions. Were you operating on
16 Channel 1 at the time or did they tell you to
17 switch over?

18 A. No, we were on 1.

19 Q. You were on 1 for the whole time?

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. My other question was just to identify
22 your boss, the lieutenant on the engine who was
23 working that day?

24 A. Lieutenant Doherty. Like I said, we
25 got separated because I was lagging behind a

1
2 little bit with the probies. They were closer to
3 the underground garage, and we were -- it was
4 better for us to go right through the Winter
5 Garden.

6 When they went to the underground
7 garage, they ended up kind of marooned. Like I
8 said, we went through the Winter Garden and then
9 north. They went south and we went north.

10 Q. All right. Thank you for doing the
11 interview with us. The time is 1040. This
12 concludes the interview.

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25